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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000555

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FOR PD/WHA (MBUCKLEY); IIP/G/WHA DIPASQUALE; EB/EPPD DCLUNE;
USTR AGASH
INFO IIP/T/ES
EMBASSIES FOR PAOS, IOs,

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

1. "La Prensa" 2/22 San Pedro Sula-based liberal paper, carried a full-page story: "Effects of a War against Iraq will be Less Dramatic for Honduras":

The Honduran Private Council for Business, the Tegucigalpa Industry Chamber of Commerce and the Forum for the Strengthening of Democracy hosted a conference with Giovanni Reyes, economist and Director of Development and Regional Cooperation for the Latin American System. He was invited to speak on "Economic Capacity for Central America to prosper by liberalized trade during a possible war".

"I don't think that the same economic problems will arise because of a war as occurred after September 11, because the circumstances are different. And it will also benefit the regional economy, if, as estimated, the war is not drawn out, but rather as the U.S. intends, the conflict ends as soon as possible".

"I do not discount that this conflict could have an impact on the commercial value of Central American products -- that is why farmers and governments should plan to export less bulk coffee and switch the industry to processed coffee because it offers added value.

2. Also in daily "La Prensa" - 2/18, an op-ed by regular columnist Gloria Leticia Pineda: "War and Peace": After receiving a lot of e-mails, my conclusion is that pacifists wouldn't be as fanatically opposed as they are now if a country other than the U.S. was the one calling for war- Why do they have such sympathy and consideration for Saddam Hussein? There are sincere people that seek peace to avoid harm to people, but at the present, there are a lot of hypocrites pretending that they are neutral. There are many people in America and Europe who are opposed for acceptable reasons, but there are also a lot of countries that envy the United States and would like to see it on its knees. But what do Honduras and the world gain with a United States on its knees? History has not taught us anything: there were no seriously coordinated efforts to stop Hitler and the world paid a high price in blood.

"The dream of peace is not an easy thing to achieve. A Syrian runs the presidency of the United Nations Council. Libyan has a high position as the leader of the committee on "Defense of Human Rights." These nations do not view the U.S. neutrally; both Syria and Libya are under suspicion of being terrorist countries. Besides, Hussein is not an educated man such as Alejandro I (King), and the United States won't leave its military forces to die of illness as Napoleon did to his eighty thousands soldiers. Already U.S. medical doctors have been sent to the war zone. Only a miracle can stop this war. Pray for it.

3. TV talk show "Frente a Frente" 2/25 - Renato Alvarez, director and anchor, at the beginning of an interview with Narcis Serra, a European socialist leader and a former Minister of Defense and the former Vice President of Spain during the administration of Felipe Gonzales, quoted Secretary of State Powell as saying made recently during his

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trip to Asia that with or without the United Nation's blessing, the U.S. will go to war against Iraq. Serra commented: "The Spanish government's recent decision to support the U.S. in an invasion of Iraq is only the government's position not that of the Spanish people. They have held strikes, because they do not want a war.

"Without any doubt Saddam Hussein has to be disarmed - because we cannot allow a country that invaded Kuwait and prosecuted a bloody war with Iran resulting in thousands and thousands of victims. This country must not have destructive and dangerous weapons, but during the Gulf War a great number of Iraq's military weapons were destroyed, and since then more weapons have been deactivated and destroyed. Why not continue with an inspection system that guarantees the international world that this problem is under control without declaring a war, because a war means thousands of

civilian and military casualties, and it will provoke the feeling of humiliation that the Islam world feels toward the U.S. Why not continue with a method that maintains this country under control without a war.

14. Another "Frente a Frente" talk show invited Ambassador Rafael Leiva Vivas, Director of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Jose Maria Leiva, a university professor of International Relations, to analyze and evaluate a possible U.S. and Iraqi conflict.

After both commentators discussed historical issues of past wars and conflict, they discussed the possibility of war between the U.S. and Iraq based in many respects on articles provided by PAS to both the invitees and the journalist. Rafael Leiva Vivas commented that the U.S has the right of self-defense as it is established under the rules of the United Nations because they were attacked by terrorists.

15. Many other TV and Radio stations also have used the Washington File as supporting documents when they have commented on the conflict or when they have invited experts to talk about the U.S. and its allies.
Palmer